

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the Office Action of January 26, 2005.

Accompanying this Amendment is a three month extension of time with requisite fee.

In the accompanying Amendments independent claim 27 has been amended and new claims 40 to 54 have been added, with new claim 48 representing a new independent claim (a check to cover the requisite extra claim fees is included).

Applicant notes with appreciation the Examiner's confirmation that claim 30, and its dependent 31, represent allowable subject matter. In the present Amendment new independent claim 48 includes features of allowable claim 30 and much of the previously presented subject matter of independent claim 27 (dependent claim 49 and 50 include features not pertaining to the central region locating of the protrusion that were removed from the prior claim 27 wording at the time of inclusion of the subject matter of claim 27 in claim 48). It is respectfully submitted that claim 48 is in condition for immediate allowance.

Claims 27-29 and 36 were rejected in the Office Action under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being considered anticipated by EP 0 476 458. Claim 37 was rejected as being deemed obvious based on EP '458 in view of Rode (different bearing devices).

In the discussion accompanying the "Response to Arguments" portion of the Office Action, there is indicated that EP '458 is considered to disclose a tubular spacer element having a protruding section having a cross sectional shape that is convex along a central direction of the tubular spacer so that an inner surface of that protruding section is arched.

Independent claim 27, as currently amended, references an **innermost** surface as the arched surface that presents (at least initially), either via direct contact or sufficiently close enough spacing, a surface to absorb rotational differences.

EP '458 fails to show an innermost surface that is arched but rather presents a relatively elongated axial planar surface as its innermost surface and thus fails to disclose the claimed invention

In view of the above remarks, Applicants submit that the rejections are overcome. Hence, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested. It is also respectfully submitted that the present claims are directed at the elected embodiment and/or depend from allowable subject matter and thus are suitable for rejoinder such that all presented claims are suited for immediate allowance.

Applicants respectfully submit that this Amendment and the above remarks obviate the outstanding rejection in this case, thereby placing the application in condition for immediate allowance. Allowance of this application is earnestly solicited.

If any fees are due in connection with the filing of this Amendment, such as fees under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17, please charge the fees to Deposit Account 02-4300; Order No. 032405.100.

Respectfully submitted,

SMITH, GAMBRELL & RUSSELL, LLP

By:


Dennis C. Rodgers, Reg. No. 32,936
1850 M Street, N.W., Suite 800
Washington, D.C. 20036
Telephone: (202) 263-4300
Facsimile: (202) 263-4329

Dated: July 26, 2005